VISIT…

THE ETTIN'S RIDDLE

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure for four 2nd- or 3rd-level characters

By JD Wiker

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Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

An ettin has begun terrorizing the hamlet of Newkeep, stealing cattle and smashing homes—and flattening anyone who tries to stop him. Meanwhile, a mysterious riddle has appeared on the walls of the local shrine—a riddle which may hold the key to vanquishing the ettin.

The Ettin's Riddle is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure suitable for four 2nd-level or 3rd-level player characters. PCs should advance to 3rd or 4th level by the time they conclude this adventure . Adjust the adventure as you see fit if you wish to play it with a very large, very small, higher level, or lower level group.

Preparation

You, the Dungeon Master (DM), need a copy of the *Player's Handbook* and the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to use this adventure. Take a moment to familiarize yourself with both the ettin sidebar in this adventure and the *polymorph other* spell in the *Player's Handbook*.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information, which you may read aloud or paraphrase when appropriate. Monster and NPC statistics are provided with each encounter in abbreviated form.

BACKGROUND

Just over two years ago, a group of adventurers learned that the inhabitants of a small hamlet had been forced to flee their home when an evil wizard took control of the local keep. The adventurers confronted the wizard in his lair and defeated him, but not without suffering heavy casualties. Only two of them survived the battle.

One of the two who survived was a young cleric named Kyrnyn. During the battle, the evil wizard, Stondylus, polymorphed Kyrnyn into an ettin. Already under the effect of a charm spell, Kyrnyn aided the wizard in pounding his former friends into paste.

After Stondylus was finally vanquished, Kyrnyn's surviving partner, a young rogue named Hartmund, promised to go find some help. Hartmund advised Kyrnyn to stay out of sight—to avoid being taken for a real ettin—until he returned. Kyrnyn never saw Hartmund again.

When Kyrnyn ran out of food, he began hunting the local wildlife. Soon he had cleared the area around the wizard's keep, forcing him to range farther afield. He encountered the occasional hunter, but swiftly learned

that if they didn't immediately run from him, he was better off running from them. The old keep became his hiding place.

It was not long before Kyrnyn began attracting monstrous attention. He was approached by a band of orcs seeking some "muscle" for their planned raids—including one on the very villagers whose former keep he now occupied. He turned them down—violently—and learned just how easy it was to take advantage of his new body's brutal strength.

When the survivors of the orc group persuaded several ogres to try to take him down, Kyrnyn discovered that his savagery was greater than he'd dreamed. His second head—which he'd always thought of as merely an extra set of eyes and ears—took on a life of its own, directing his powerful limbs in ways he wouldn't have chosen himself.

At first Kyrnyn believed that he had been imagining things. But the next time he encountered a hunter in the forest, his other head again took charge, and before he could will his limbs to stop, he had beaten the poor man to death. Kyrnyn could only watch in horror as, day after day, his second head took control of their mutual body.

In time, the second head—calling itself "Muck"—gained almost complete control of Kyrnyn's body. Kyrnyn became an unwilling passenger, and worse, a witness to Muck's atrocities. When Kyrnyn objected, Muck pummeled him unconscious. The only times Kyrnyn could operate his body were when Muck was asleep.

Kyrnyn had given up on Hartmund ever returning, and resigned himself to life as an ettin—until this development. Now he renewed his efforts at restoring himself to his true form. Through prayer, he came to realize that he could one day cast a dispel magic divine spell, suitably powerful to undo the polymorph spell that had so drastically altered his life.

But Kyrnyn found that his deity, Heironeous, would not grant him the *dispel magic* spell. Instead, Kyrnyn was granted a vision of a kind of riddle:

"Two heads have we, but born with one.

We avenged, healed, and protected.

Our master was Invincible,

But punished we all who objected.

Heeded we the six-armed king,

And so by our god were rejected.

Thus, this is our fate:

One head, twice bisected."

At first he took the verse for instructions on how to live in accordance with Heironeous's wish, but soon realized that it was somehow the key to his dilemma. Whenever he prayed most fervently, he saw the riddle again. He took to praying all night, whenever Muck was asleep, and writing his visions on the walls of the keep, to better enable him to study the riddle.

Muck, of course, took exception. Although Muck proved unable to read, he defaced the riddles out of spite, and again, beat Kyrnyn for objecting. Kyrnyn despaired until he remembered a small shrine to Heironeous near the place where the villagers had resettled. He began slipping down there to pray and record his visions. Sometimes he had to dodge the villagers, but at least they didn't erase his notes.

Unfortunately, one morning Muck woke up early, and noticed the villagers' rather plentiful herds of cattle. The hamlet became Muck's favorite target for raids, which made it even more difficult for Kyrnyn to slip in and out unchallenged.

Kyrnyn has tried on a few occasions, during his nightly visits, to explain himself, but the villagers wouldn't listen. Kyrnyn has resolved simply to be more careful, but he knows in his heart that it won't be much longer before the villagers hire adventurers to vanquish the marauding ettin. At this point, he's not even sure he would object—if it will end his suffering, and Muck's reign of terror.

The key to lifting Kyrnyn's curse and restoring him to normal form lies in getting him to see the error of his ways. While Kyrnyn understands that the riddle somehow relates to undoing Stondylus's spell, he has yet to grasp that the riddle hints at more than merely the fact that the ettin is not what it appears to be. Heironeous's riddle is a message to Kyrnyn, pointing out to him that, ettin or not, Kyrnyn was sometimes extremely brutal and cruel. Truly, while the cleric observed all the proper rituals and devotedly served Heironeous, his zeal to punish evil sometimes led him to acts of unusually callous violence against helpless foes.

Preventing Kyrnyn from returning to his true form is meant to teach the cleric that expedient brutality

does not represent the justice, valor, chivalry, and honor for which Heironeous stands. Unfortunately, the chaotic evil nature of the ettin asserted itself before Kyrnyn could learn this lesson. Now, with Muck all but completely dominant, Heironeous has decided to intervene more directly, by putting a small group of adventurers on the scene. Hopefully, the adventurers will help Kyrnyn see his mistakes and repent. If not, they will have to destroy him, to prevent Muck from causing more harm.

Kyrnyn, male human Clr5: CR 3; Size Medium Humanoid; HD 5d8+5; hp 33; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+5 armor, +1 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d8+1, heavy mace), or +4 ranged (1d6+1, javelin); SA; SQ; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +9; AL LG; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 17, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +5, Heal +7, Knowledge (religion) +3;Combat Casting, Extra Turning, Iron Will.

Possessions: Chainmail, +1 mace, javelin.

Spells Prepared (8/7/6/5): 0—*cure minor wounds* (5), *detect magic, detect poison, mending;* 1st—*cause fear, command, cure light wounds* (4), *protection from evil**; *2nd—aid*, cure moderate wounds* (2), *lesser restoration, silence* (2); 3rd—*cure serious wounds* (2), *magic circle against evil*, remove blindness/deafness, remove disease.*

*Kyrnyn knows these spells, but lacks the proper material components to cast them.

Muck: CR 5; Large Giant (13 ft. tall); HD 5d8+5; hp 33; Init –1 (–1 Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 18 (–1 size, –1 Dex, +7 natural, +3 hide); Atk +4 melee (1d10+6, greatclub), or +1 ranged; Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; SQ darkvision 90 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort 6, Ref +0, Will +9; Str 23, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 17, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +5, Heal +7, Knowledge (religion) +3; Combat Casting; Extra Turning; Iron Will.

Possessions: Greatclub.

Because Muck is only partly in control of the body he shares with Kyrnyn, and because he doesn't control Kyrnyn's head at all, he does not gain some of the bonuses other ettins gain for having two heads. Muck cannot use the superior two-weapon fighting ability, nor does he gain the +2 racial bonus to Listen, Spot, and Search checks for having two heads, unless Kyrnyn is conscious.

Muck cannot cast any of Kyrnyn's spells. Only when Kyrnyn is conscious, and Muck does not interfere, can Kyrnyn cast the spells he has learned. Muck has already interfered by destroying Kyrnyn's holy symbol, which was his divine focus for many spells. And though Kyrnyn cannot cast his domain spells without a divine focus, Heironeous continues to grant them, for reasons Kyrnyn cannot fathom. Similarly, Kyrnyn can only wonder why Heironeous does not see fit to allow him the *dispel magic* he needs to attempt to return to his true form.

Kyrnyn is dominant only when Muck is asleep. At these times, any damage Kyrnyn suffers has a cumulative 10% chance per point of damage of awakening his evil head, at which point Muck becomes the dominant personality again.

Adventure Synopsis

The adventurers arrive at the hamlet of Newkeep just after an ettin has destroyed the only bridge over the nearby river. Unable to cross until the bridge is rebuilt, the adventurers have nothing better to do than listen to tales about the ettin.

While the adventurers are waiting to cross the river, the ettin appears again, this time moving stealthily through the hamlet. The villagers ask the adventurers to help them slay the creature, explaining that if they must do it themselves, they will have no time to rebuild the bridge.

Once the adventurers get on the track of the ettin, they can either try to unravel the mystery of the riddle, lay a trap for the ettin's next visit, or track the giant to its lair. When they finally encounter the ettin, Kyrnyn gains control of his ettin body and explains who he really is, and his dilemma. He begs the adventurers to help him lift his curse—if only by slaying him before his other half, Muck, takes any more innocent lives.

While the adventurers are deciding what to do, the villagers have taken matters into their own hands, and are moving in a mob to attack the marauding ettin. The adventurers have only a short time before the villagers arrive, and once they arrive, an even shorter time to solve the riddle before Muck beats them to death—or they're forced to kill the poor cleric Kyrnyn.

Character Hooks

Honor and valor may not be enough to motivate the adventurers to tackle an ettin, so if you, the DM, want to provide a few extra nudges, you might try some of the following.

One of the adventurers may know someone in Newkeep—an old friend, or a relative. It could even be one of the three major nonplayer characters of the

Ettin

Large Giant

Hit Dice: 10d8+20 (65 hp)

Initiative: +3 (–1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 18 (–1 size, –1 Dex, +7 natural, +3 hide)

Attacks: 2 greatclubs +12/+7 melee; or 2 longspears +4/–1 ranged

Damage: Greatclub 1d10+6; longspear 1d8+6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Two-weapon fighting

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90 ft.

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +4

Abilities: Str 23, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 11

Skills: Listen +9, Spot +9

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative

Climate/Terrain: Cold and temperate hill, mountains, and underground

Organization: Solitary, gang (2–4), troupe (1–2 plus 1–2 brown bears), band (3–5 plus 1–2 brown bears), or colony (3–5 plus 1–2 brown bears and 7–12 orcs or 9–16 goblins)

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Advancement: By character class

Ettins, or two-headed giants, are vicious and unpredictable hunters that stalk the night. Their two heads make them exceptionally sharp-eyed and alert. They are excellent guardians and scouts.

An ettin has orclike facial features and pink to brownish skin. It never bathes if it can help it, which leaves it so dirty its skin resembles thick, gray hide (ettins that don't smell bad are rare). An ettin has long, stringy hair and large, yellowing teeth. Adult ettins are about 13 feet tall and weigh 5,200 lbs. They live about 75 years.

Ettins have no language of their own but speak a pidgin of Orc, Goblin, and Giant. Creatures that can speak any of these languages must succeed at an Intelligence check (DC 15) to communicate with an ettin. Check once for each bit of information: If the other creature speaks two of these languages, the DC is 10, and for someone who speaks all three, the DC is 5. Ettins talk among themselves without difficulty, despite their low Intelligence, and a lone ettin often whiles away the hours chatting with itself.

Combat

Though ettins aren't very intelligent, they are cunning fighters. They prefer to ambush their victims rather than charge into a straight fight, but once the battle has started, an ettin usually fights furiously until all enemies are dead.

Two-Weapon Fighting (Ex): An ettin fights with a club or spear in each hand. Because each of its two heads controls an arm, the ettin does not suffer an attack or damage penalty for attacking with two weapons.

Skills: An ettin's two heads give it a +2 racial bonus to Listen, Spot, and Search checks.

Ettin Society

Ettins like to establish their lairs in remote, rocky areas. They dwell in dark, underground caves that stink of decaying food and offal. They tolerate other creatures, such as orcs, if these can be useful in some way. Otherwise, ettins tend to be violently isolationist, crushing trespassers without question.

Ettins are generally solitary, and mated pairs stay together for only a few months after a child is born. Young ettins mature quickly. Within eight to ten months after birth, they are self-sufficient enough to go off on their own.

On rare occasions, a particularly strong ettin may gather a small group, or gang, of ettins. This gang stays together only as long as the leader is undefeated. Any major defeat shatters the leader's hold over the others, and they go their separate ways.

Ettins place little value on wealth but are canny enough to understand its value to others. They collect treasure only because it can buy them the services of goblins or orcs. These lesser creatures sometimes build traps around ettins' lairs, or help them fight off powerful opponents.

hamlet: Aranda, Malwick, or Restik. Remember, however; that Newkeep has only been around for about four years; before that, nearly everyone lived in the village of Oldkeep, where the evil wizard Stondylus moved in and took over.

One or more of the characters might find the beginnings of a romantic interest in the hamlet. The residents of Newkeep include some impressionable young men and women who might find in an attractive adventurer a sympathetic ear—and ask for help, lending their voices to the entreaties of Aranda, Malwick, and Restik.

If one of the characters worships Heironeous, note that the major religion in Newkeep revolves around a shrine to the god of valor. Even if Restik, the hamlet's spiritual advisor, doesn't use that to pressure the adventurers, you, the DM, might remind the players what qualities Heironeous rewards (justice, valor, chivalry, and honor).

Alternate Endings

Roleplayers are sometimes cleverer than they let on, and your group may get straight to the heart of the mystery right away. In such a case, you should be prepared to alter the events of the adventure somewhat to provide players with as stirring a climax as possible.

The most obvious ploy is for Malwick to spontaneously conclude that he doesn't care if there's a good man inside the ettin—this is the beast that killed his father—and attack. Any attack on the ettin while Kyrnyn is dominant stands a chance of "waking" Muck, the evil side of the ettin, and if the session needs a bit of excitement, you should just take Muck's revival as read. Malwick then takes the resultant rampage as a sign that he is justified, and tries to convince the other villagers to help him kill the ettin before it's too late.

The Hamlet of Newkeep

Newkeep is located near a fast river, with a fairly thick forest nearby. Since crossing the river without a bridge is problematic, the river should not be shallow, and Newkeep (and its missing bridge) should not be too close to another major settlement. Ideally, the river should be in a narrow gorge, about 60 feet across, and about 40 feet below the level of the bridge.

Newkeep is a community of just over 200 people, slightly more than half of whom are adults. Of the adults, only 45 are healthy, capable males. (The ettin has taken care of the rest, as Newkeep's fresh batch of graves attests.) Newkeep is overseen by its elders, the foremost of whom is Aranda, a spry 80-year-old grandmother. Aranda is a 3rd-level commoner. The hamlet's "authorities" consist of a single 3rd-level warrior, Malwick, whose father (and formerly, the other constable of Newkeep) was killed by the ettin.

The only other character of note in the community is Restik, a 4th-level adept devoted to Heironeous. He tends the small shrine to his deity, which the ettin has lately been visiting. Of these three, only Restik will offer his services to join the adventurers in any plan to face the ettin (despite protests from Malwick that he is needed in the hamlet). Malwick, while a cooperative soul, knows that without his guidance, the hamlet's defenders will not survive another attack by the ettin.

Newkeep (hamlet): Conventional; AL NG; 100 gp limit; Assets 1,050 gp; Population 212; Mixed (human 172, halfling 19, elf 12, dwarf 8, gnome 5, half-elf 3, half-orc 3).

Authority Figures: Constable Malwick, male half-elf War3.

Important Characters: Aranda, female human Com3 (elder); Restik, male human Adp4 (healer).

KEY TO NEWKEEP

The following section details the more interesting portions of the hamlet of Newkeep. For buildings not specifically called out on the map, assume that a family of 1d4+4 1st-level commoners lives there.

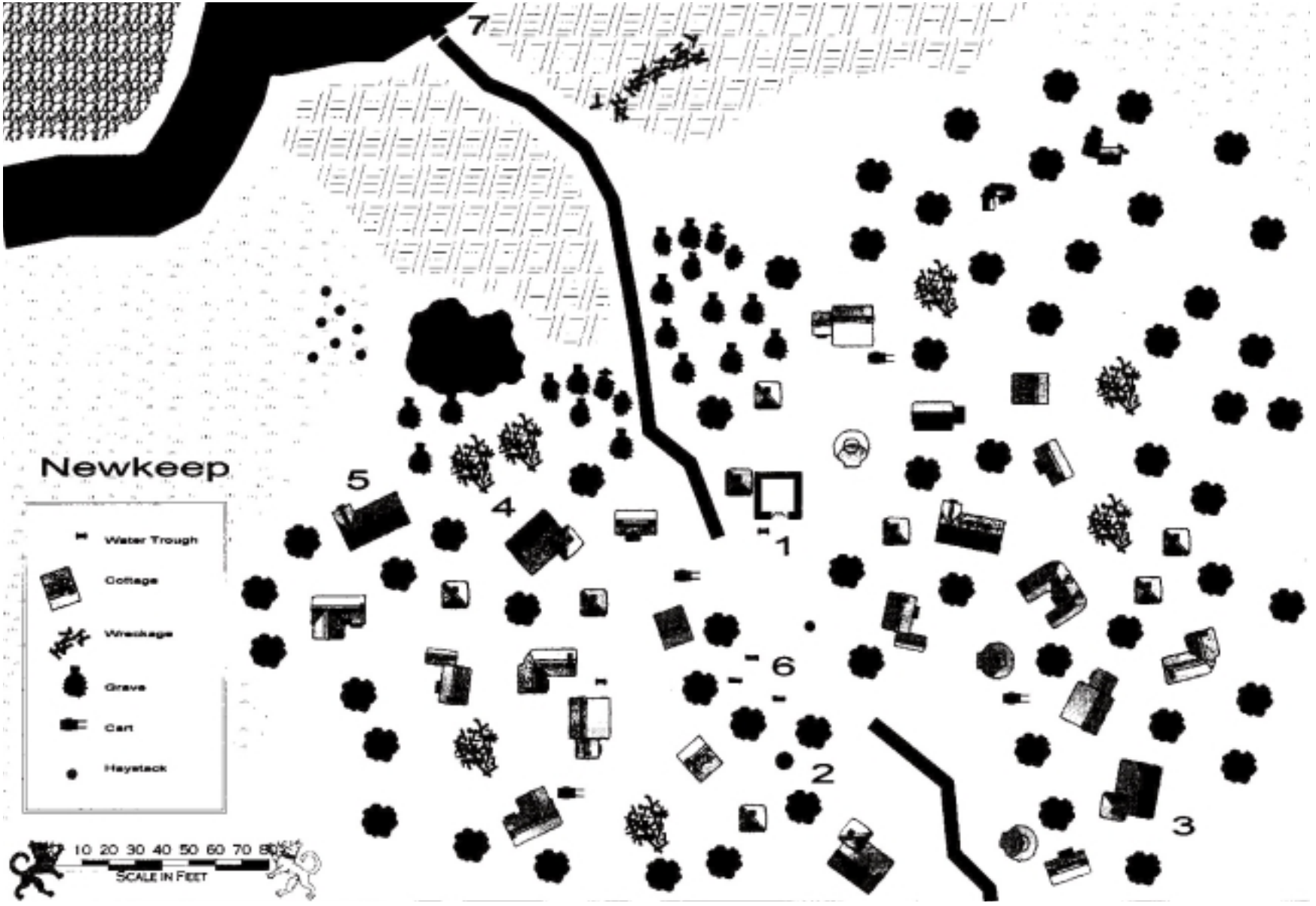
1. The Keep

Aranda, the elder of Newkeep, lives in the keep alone, in a two-room area on the building's only completed level. The place is stuffed with the kinds of knick-knacks and odds and ends that an 80-year-old grandmother can accumulate over the course of her life.

Aranda, female human Com3: Size M; HD 3d4–4; hp 8 (+3 Toughness); Init –1 (–1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 9 (–1 Dex); Atk +0 melee, or +0 ranged; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +4; AL NG; Str 7, Dex 8, Con 9, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Craft (looming) +6, Craft (baking) +6, Handle Animal +5, Listen +4, Spot +3; Endurance, Iron Will, Toughness.

Possessions: simple clothes, household items.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2. The Shrine

The shrine was the only building already on the site when the villagers of Newkeep moved here from Oldkeep. Restik has been with the shrine all along, and it was he who suggested that the villagers reestablish their home here. He makes regular forays into the hamlet to visit the injured and ailing, and provide what healing he can. He has a small herb garden just south of Newkeep, and spends his spare time there.

Visitors to the shrine can see the riddle painted on the west wall. (See "Background.")

Restik, male human Adp4: Size M; HD 4d6; hp 12; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +2 melee, or +2 ranged; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +5; AL LG; Str 9, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +3, Heal +7, Knowledge (religion) +3; Endurance, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Heal).

Possessions: Simple robe, holy symbol.

Spells Prepared (4/3/1): 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *guidance, purify food and drink*; 1—*cure light wounds* (2), *protection from evil;* 2—*cure moderate wounds*.

3. Malwick's Home

Malwick is the son of a human fighter and an elf woman. Malwick's mother died during childbirth, forcing his father to retire from adventuring and raise his son. The ettin recently killed Malwick's father with a single blow while Malwick could only watch. Malwick feels a strong urge to avenge his father, but similarly, he feels the sense of responsibility his father drilled into him. The feelings of vengeance are winning out, however, and it is only a matter of time before Malwick gathers his temporary militia and goes hunting for Muck. The arrival of the adventurers has forestalled this event somewhat, as Malwick hopes they will deal with the ettin for him.

Malwick, male 1/2E War3: Size M; HD 3d8+3; hp 18; Init +4 (+4 Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; AC 13 (+3 hide armor); Atk +3 melee (1d8+1, crit x3, shortspear), or +3 ranged (1d8, crit x3, longbow,); SQ immune to sleep and similar, +2 racial bonus vs enchantments, low-light vision, elven blood; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; AL CG; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Handle Animal +3, Jump +5, Listen +2, Spot +2; Alertness, Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Shortspear, longbow, 20 arrows, hide armor, dagger.

4. Hannah's Home

Like Aranda, Hannah is an elderly human woman whose children have long since started households of their own. Her large home is the closest thing the town has to an inn, and if the adventurers elect to stay in Newkeep for any length of time, hers will be the first choice of places to sleep. Hannah treats her guests to hearty meals and insists that they finish every bite. Her home has room for four people other than herself.

Hannah also remembers when Kyrnyn's party of adventurers came through town, two years ago—though she doesn't remember any of them by name. "They were just passing through, too, and when they heard about the evil wizard Stondylus, they just had to go see what they could do to help us. None of them ever came back, I'm afraid."

5. Temmet's Home

Temmet is a young half-elf, like Malwick, though considerably less energetic than the hamlet's constable. Temmet suffered from a wasting disease in his youth, leaving him frail and sickly. As a result, he is exempt from most of the more physical duties of the hamlet, though he compensates by lending his expertise wherever he can—which includes making the local ale. The large house that Temmet shares with passers-through does not actually belong to him; he was its only tenant when its owner was killed by the ettin. He considers himself the place's caretaker and is eager to share the large place whenever Aranda asks—such as when the adventurers need a place to stay. For meals, though, Temmet refers visitors to either Hannah or Aranda. Temmet's home has room for three people other than himself.

6. The Tavern

Newkeep's unofficial tavern lies the square in the middle of the hamlet. There, the villagers have set up a few small tables and some benches, and Gerd Flintwhisker, Newkeep's only dwarf, sells Temmet's ale in the evenings. He and Temmet make the stuff here during the day, and while the sun is up, people can almost always find him here. Like Hannah, Gerd remembers the group of adventurers that passed through here a couple years ago, and how they went to investigate Newkeep. "Wizard, cleric, rogue, couple of fighters," Gerd says. "Stayed at Hannah's, except for the cleric. He stayed at the shrine. They all got themselves

killed going up against Stondylus, may he rot in peace." Gerd assumes that the evil wizard is dead, by virtue of the fact that no one has heard from him these last two years.

7. The Bridge

The remains of the bridge hang limply from both sides of the gorge. The distance between the opposite banks spans 60 feet, and the river rushes 40 feet below the level of the bridge. The pilings on both sides remain in excellent shape, and building a replacement bridge should not be terribly difficult—just time consuming.

If the adventurers try to cross the river without the bridge, they will almost certainly need to use magic. They could conceivably climb down one side (Climb, DC 15), swim across (Swim, DC 15), and climb back up the other side (Climb, DC 15), which is essentially what the villagers will do when they begin rebuilding the bridge. Obviously, though, this plan is dangerous, and anyone who fails a Swim check crossing the river gets swept 4d10 feet downstream each round until he regains control.

ARRIVING AT NEWKEEP

It is the afternoon of a beautiful day, and your journey has been peaceful so far. You should be able to cover a few more miles before finding a place to stay for the night.

In the distance lies a hamlet, perhaps forty small homes scattered around a stone keep still under construction. Between you and the first house are fields of wheat, and cattle in pastures.

Something is amiss, however. From behind the farthest of the houses suddenly appears a two-headed giant—an ettin, wielding a broken piece of timber. Bellowing angrily, it strikes at something on the ground, then strolls off into the woods to the right of the hamlet, stopping long enough to snatch up a terrified cow. Within seconds, it's lost among the trees.

The adventurers have just witnessed the tail end of the latest attack of Muck, the ettin. Because the hamlet is still a mile away, and its exit path does not cross the adventurers' own approach, joining in might be a little difficult. The adventurers are welcome to try, of course, but the ettin is not going to turn back just to give them a good shot at it.

Should the party instead head directly into the hamlet, read the following aloud:

The villagers ignore your approach. They are far too busy with the aftermath of the ettin's attack: tending their wounded, rounding up panicked livestock, and clearing away the debris of smashed fences and walls. Surprisingly, though, a few villagers seem to be taking the situation in stride: Nearby, an old man is chopping up a broken piece of fencing for firewood; further on, a trio of young children is playing in some puddles—puddles shaped like giant feet.

Most of the villagers not immediately dealing with cleanup efforts are hurrying toward the far end of the hamlet, and the bulk of the community is already gathered there. A small group of men and an old woman examine the wreckage of a wooden bridge that, incongruously, now lies in a pasture, with cows wandering around it. Beyond the pasture, on the far side of a narrow gorge, the other end of the bridge hangs limp and broken.

Muck has just destroyed the bridge the adventurers need to continue their journey. The people of Newkeep aren't as upset by the destruction of the bridge, however, as they are about the three people the ettin killed in the process. Two lie a short distance away, in the pasture. (The third was on the bridge when it came apart; his body will never be found.) Near the bodies, about a dozen lightly armed men wait while their leader, Malwick, the local constable, receives healing from Restik, the priest from the shrine of Heironeous. The men are tired and their morale is low.

"What Happened Here?"

Depending on whom the adventurers speak to (or who speaks to them), they can get a fairly clear picture of the state of affairs in Newkeep. If they merely listen in, they'll get much the same information. On the other hand, if they head toward the river, Aranda will approach them and explain things.

Random Villager: "Two farmhouses in the past week. Heironeous knows how many cattle. Now the bridge. *And* we've lost three more good men! I don't know why I stay here. I have a cousin south of here who could put me and my family up. I'm getting too old to keep moving every few years like this."

Random Militiaman: "We're losing one, two, three men a day to this thing. It may be me next! I have a family—who will take care of them when I'm gone?"

Random Carpenter: "He's a strong'un, sure, but that bridge was old, too. Not surprising he was able to tear it in half like that. Still, I don't know what Noldur thought he was doing, luring it out on the bridge like that. Probably figured it would collapse and take them both. Noldur always was brave."

Aranda, Malwick, and Restik can give more complete accounts of what's been going on, and if the adventurers press, the villagers will refer them to one of those three. Any of them will explain the gist of the story: "A two-headed giant has moved into the area, and is stealing our cattle, smashing our homes, and killing our families." However, the villager suggests that, for a full account, they repair to the open-air tavern in the hamlet's square. There, all three explain about the arrival of Muck, either as a long narrative or in answer to the adventurers' questions.

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> "Just about five weeks ago, a hunter told us he'd seen a giant crossing the wheat field north of the hamlet, in the middle of the night. We set up watches, but no one else saw anything. Then, three weeks ago, several people saw it, just before dawn. Malwick's father managed to put an arrow in it, but that just made it angry. It killed Malwick's father, and four other men, before it ran off into the woods.
>
> "Since then, it's been coming back every day and every night, almost as if to punish us. At some point during the day, it will come thundering out of the woods, right over there, and chase our cattle around until it catches one. In the process, it smashes our homes, not caring if there are people inside. If we try to stop it, we lose at least one man, and end up with several wounded, while we barely even scratch it.
>
> "It also comes in at night, but it's not after our cattle then. It almost seems like it's trying to be stealthy. Sometimes it even runs away from us. At first we thought it might be a different giant, but it's the same one—we've seen marks on it where we'd hit it with arrows earlier the same day."

Aranda, Malwick, and Restik ask the adventurers for help. "It's obvious we can't fight this thing on our own. It's too big, too powerful. Is there *anything* you can do? If these attacks don't stop soon, there'll be nothing left of Newkeep."

If the adventurers offer to help, the three villagers breathe a collective sigh of relief. "Thank Heironeous! " Aranda says. "Just let us know what you need. I can't promise anything, of course—the giant's taken or destroyed a lot of our resources. But at the very least, we can give you a dry place to sleep. Hannah and Temmet have plenty of room at their farm, and they've had adventurers staying with them before.""

Aranda makes sure the adventurers have what they need, though Malwick is decidedly uncomfortable with any requests for personnel. "What happens if the giant circles around you while you're out looking for it, and attacks here? We need every available man to guard the hamlet." Malwick has no objection to providing assistance for any plan that involves staying close to Newkeep, however, and can provide 25 commoners—with the admonition that he won't approve any plan that puts his people in unnecessary risk.

Restik, meanwhile, happily offers whatever aid he can provide, consisting mostly of healing spells and advice. If any of the adventurers are clerics or paladins, he also can offer a quiet place to pray, though he only allows prayers to Heironeous in the shrine.

If the Adventurers Won't Help

If the adventurers' own senses of chivalry and heroism fail to motivate them to help the people of Newkeep, the villagers themselves provide the motivation. They cannot rebuild the bridge—the one the adventurers need to cross to get on with their journey—while the ettin is menacing the community. The men who would otherwise contribute to the construction effort are all busy keeping guard over the hamlet and the cattle. Parties that venture into the woods for timber must go heavily guarded. And there's no guarantee that the ettin won't simply smash the new bridge before it's finished, as well. All in all, building a bridge for the convenience of a group of adventurers is fairly low on the list of priorities for the folk of Newkeep.

Of course, the adventurers can no doubt work out a way to cross the river without using the bridge, if they are that determined to avoid this responsibility. The people of Newkeep gather to watch their efforts, and if the adventurers devise a way to get across easily, the vil-

lagers grumble. "They're powerful treasure-seekers. They've got more important things to do."

If the adventurers still insist on leaving, as a last-ditch effort, Aranda offers to pay them. "We don't have much, but if the monster isn't stopped, we won't be needing it anyway." She then takes up a collection among the villagers, consisting of various coins, jewelry, silver tableware and candlesticks, antiques, and even a child's doll with tiny silver buttons on its clothes. In total, the villagers raise about 100 gp worth of treasure to buy the adventurers' help.

Should the adventurers diligently refuse to help, the villagers give up. But the god of valor, Heironeous, is less than impressed by their heartlessness, and may throw some bad fortune their way. At the very least, clerics or paladins dedicated to Heironeous find that their deity is a bit less forthcoming with divine spells for a while.

GATHERING CLUES

Although the adventurers may want to dive immediately into hunting down the ettin, or perhaps planning an ambush for its next visit, they may also wish to learn as much about the situation as they can. Aranda, Malwick, and Restik are happy to answer questions and show the group around.

Newkeep's only really interesting piece of architecture is the unfinished keep, meant to serve one day as a defense in the event bandits attack. Currently, it is Aranda's home and office; she can be found there most of the time, and while the adventurers are in Newkeep, she will serve them meals in her home.

Aranda can explain that work began on the keep when the villagers moved here four years ago, but that the demands of establishing the new hamlet have kept the completion of the keep a low priority. "I generally have to shame folks into working on it," she explains. "I serve them a nice dinner, then complain about how drafty it is. That usually gets about a week's work out of them, before they find something else important to do." She shakes her head. "Of course, that was before the giant came."

The other interesting feature of Newkeep is something of an oddity, and the villagers don't know whether to treat it as a miracle, or an omen. Restik can show the adventurers the shrine of Heironeous—and the writings that cover the walls. He freely admits that he's puzzled, but he's certain that it's not a sign from his god. "The paint and brush came from Jolden's farm, right over there," Restik says. "To me, it looks like someone was trying to solve a riddle—and wrote it out to keep it straight." If asked what he believes the solution to the riddle is, Restik sheepishly admits: "I think the answer is 'the ettin.' But that's crazy. Ettins are mindless monsters. They certainly can't read and write, let alone solve riddles."

Malwick is less forthcoming with information about the ettin than the others, but not because he's being secretive. "It's big, it has two heads, and it kills people for no good reason. If you don't kill it, I will." He'll explain how it killed his father ("One second standing there, loading his crossbow, the next, pounded flat."), and where he thinks it is: "Oldkeep. It's the only place that makes sense. If this thing isn't working for Stondylus, it's because those adventurers a while back killed him. This thing must have moved in after they left." He also has some independent confirmation of his suspicion. "Jolden's son—before *he* got pounded flat—tracked the giant as far as the Oldkeep Road, and there's nothing else up there. If I could be certain that we'd catch it at home, I'd take every man I had and go up there and burn the keep down, with that thing inside."

THE ETTIN'S NEXT VISIT

The ettin will visit again the same night the group arrives, and again the following morning. If the adventurers get to work right away, they can deal with Kyrnyn, instead of Muck. Should they encounter the ettin at night, read the following aloud to the players:

> Moving as stealthily as his massive bulk will allow, the giant creeps between the houses of Newkeep, heading in the general direction of the tavern in the center of the hamlet. His right head seems to be dozing, but his left head is alert—perhaps even a little frightened.

If the adventurers encounter the ettin during the day, read the following aloud instead:

> With an animalistic bellow, the ettin thunders purposefully out of the woods east of the hamlet. It takes a few half-hearted swipes at some cattle as it passes, but it is quickly closing the distance to Newkeep itself. Its right head laughs menacingly, while its left head looks quiet, seeming almost afraid to speak.

If the adventurers elect to ambush the ettin, they have a choice of planning for a daytime or a nighttime visit. Obviously, which one they choose determines whether they'll be facing Muck or Kyrnyn—which in turn determines the ettin's tactics.

Some traps obviously won't bother the ettin, no matter who's in charge. For example, no pit that the villagers could dig in time for the ettin's next visit would be deep enough to hold it for longer than a round. Nor are there any trees tall enough to rig a suitable snare trap. You will have to estimate the effectiveness of any mechanical trap the adventurers cook up.

An ambush, on the other hand, stands a much better chance of success—especially against Muck, who assumes that there's no one and nothing in the village that can hurt him. Ambushes that prey on Muck's hunger or rage have the best chance.

If the adventurers plan their trap for the ettin's nighttime visit, Kyrnyn is dominant; Muck is asleep. The ettin behaves markedly carefully, circling the hamlet once before creeping north along the road to the shrine, where he kneels to pray—quietly, of course, so as not to wake the villagers or Muck. Should the adventurers actually let Kyrnyn get this far—and he doesn't spot them waiting for him—they can observe this strange behavior. If they're careful, they can even approach Kyrnyn and discuss the situation. (See "Talking to Kyrnyn" section.)

But should Kyrnyn suspect even for a moment that he is in danger, he takes to his heels, ducking and weaving through the hamlet in order to take advantage of the cover the buildings afford. If trapped, he uses his *cause fear* and *command* spells to clear his way—which should be a big clue to the adventurers that they're dealing with something unusual. At no time does Kyrnyn resort to violence—though remember that each point of damage he suffers has a cumulative 10% chance of waking up Muck. To avoid this—and the brutality that will no doubt result—Kyrnyn's primary tactic is flight.

HUNTING THE ETTIN

The most direct option the adventurers can choose is to try to track the ettin to its lair—which isn't difficult, considering the huge trail that it leaves. Any character who can make a Track check (DC 8) can easily locate the path the ettin has worn through the forest between Newkeep and Oldkeep. And should the adventurers lose the trail somehow, if they've spoken to Gerd Flintwhisker or Malwick, they can make a reasonable guess that the trail ends at Oldkeep (Wis check, DC 15). Assuming the adventurers take a pretty straight route, they can reach the ruins of Oldkeep in about three hours.

Encounters in the Forest

Unfortunately, the ettin is not the only danger lurking in the woods between the two hamlets. In addition to any wilderness encounter you wish to throw at the adventurers, you should consider dropping in these two encounters at some point.

Orcs: Eight of the orcs who once tried to recruit Kyrnyn still wander the forest, and they take notice if a party of adventurers approaches from the direction of Newkeep. Even so, the orcs are mostly just curious; they want to know the adventurers' intentions. If they're out to kill the ettin, the orcs won't interfere—and they'll actually offer directions, provided any of the adventurers speak Orcish.

With this in mind, the orcs' initial approach is peaceful, if guarded. Should negotiations break down—or the adventurers attack—the orcs join battle.

Orcs: CR 1; Medium-Size Humanoids; HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (+4 scale mail); Atk +3 melee (1d12+3, greataxe), or +1 ranged (1d6+2, javelin); SQ darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will –1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8.

> Ahead of you, a pair of orcs suddenly rises up beside the path, stepping out into the open. Their weapons are at their sides. "No arrow," says one of them in broken Common. "We want talk."

Skills and Feats: Listen +2, Spot +2; Alertness.

Possessions: Greataxes, javelins, scale mail.

Each orc carries 100 gp. Additionally, one of the orcs has four gems in his boot: one worth 50 gp, another two worth 20 gp each, and a fourth worth 10 gp.

Ogres*:* Kyrnyn has made a lot of enemies for himself. Unfortunately for the adventurers, not all of them are as willing to parlay as the orcs. Two of the ogres who survived their long-ago clash with Kyrnyn have recently returned to the area to see if the ettin is still around. So far, they've seen no sign (despite wandering about on the ettin's trail), and so are feeling pretty cocky. They'll try to attack the party on the trail by appearing behind and ahead of them simultaneously.

Ogres: CR 2; HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init –1 (–1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (–1 size, –1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide); Atk +8 melee (2d6+7, greatclub), or +1 ranged (2d6+5, longspear); SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 8, Con 15, int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Climb +, Listen +2, Spot +2; Weapon Focus (greatclub).

Possessions: Greatclub, longspear, hide armor.

The ogres have not had much luck raiding lately, and so have only 300 gp between them. One of them, however, has a *ring of swimming*, which, because it is personally afraid of water, it considers only a pretty bauble.

The Villagers Mobilize

Shortly after the adventurers depart, Malwick is seized by the notion that the adventurers have decided to betray them. He convinces a dozen members of his militia that Newkeep will never see the adventurers again—and that slaying the ettin is now up to them. Gathering their farming implements, torches, and a handful of more effective weapons, they set off up the trail to Oldkeep, planning to bring the ettin down, no matter what the cost.

Although Aranda and the other villagers try to dissuade Malwick, they remain keenly aware that sending anyone to stop Malwick's group will leave Newkeep completely undefended. They do, however, dispatch one of the villagers to warn the adventurers that Malwick is on his way. If Restik has not joined the group, it will be him. If he has already joined the adventurers, the hamlet sends Gerd Flintwhisker.

Unless the adventurers have taken specific precautions to prevent any interference in their mission from the villagers, Malwick's mob arrives just after the group has encountered Kyrnyn in Oldkeep. They do their best to circumvent any peaceful solutions the adventurers might have devised, and simply try to kill the ettin as quickly as possible.

OLDKEEP

Up the hill ahead of you, a squat stone tower rises from the trees. Ruined, overgrown buildings surround the place, indicating that here, and not very long ago, there was a small community. Now only crows and rats seem to live here.

Curiously, the main keep wall appears to have been written on, perhaps by someone using the blackened end of a piece of firewood. In most places, the writing has been wildly obscured, but here and there, intelligible letters and words appear: "… HEADS ... AVENGED … MASTER … PUNISHED ... REJECTED … ONE HEAD."

Kyrnyn originally made his lair in the ruins of Stondylus's citadel, on the site of the villagers' previous home of Oldkeep. While the village has fallen completely into ruin, the keep is still in prime shape, and if the adventurers have tracked the ettin to his lair, this is where he will be.

Key to Oldkeep

The only new thing about Oldkeep are the three neat graves just northeast of the keep itself. These are the final resting places of Kyrnyn's old adventuring group, and bear the names "Zimmian," "Gordell," and "Thorvald Halfgranite." The inscriptions are cut in a fairly precise hand—that of Hartmund, Kyrnyn's absent rogue friend.

Other than the graves, Oldkeep's only points of interest are inside the keep itself.

1. The Doors

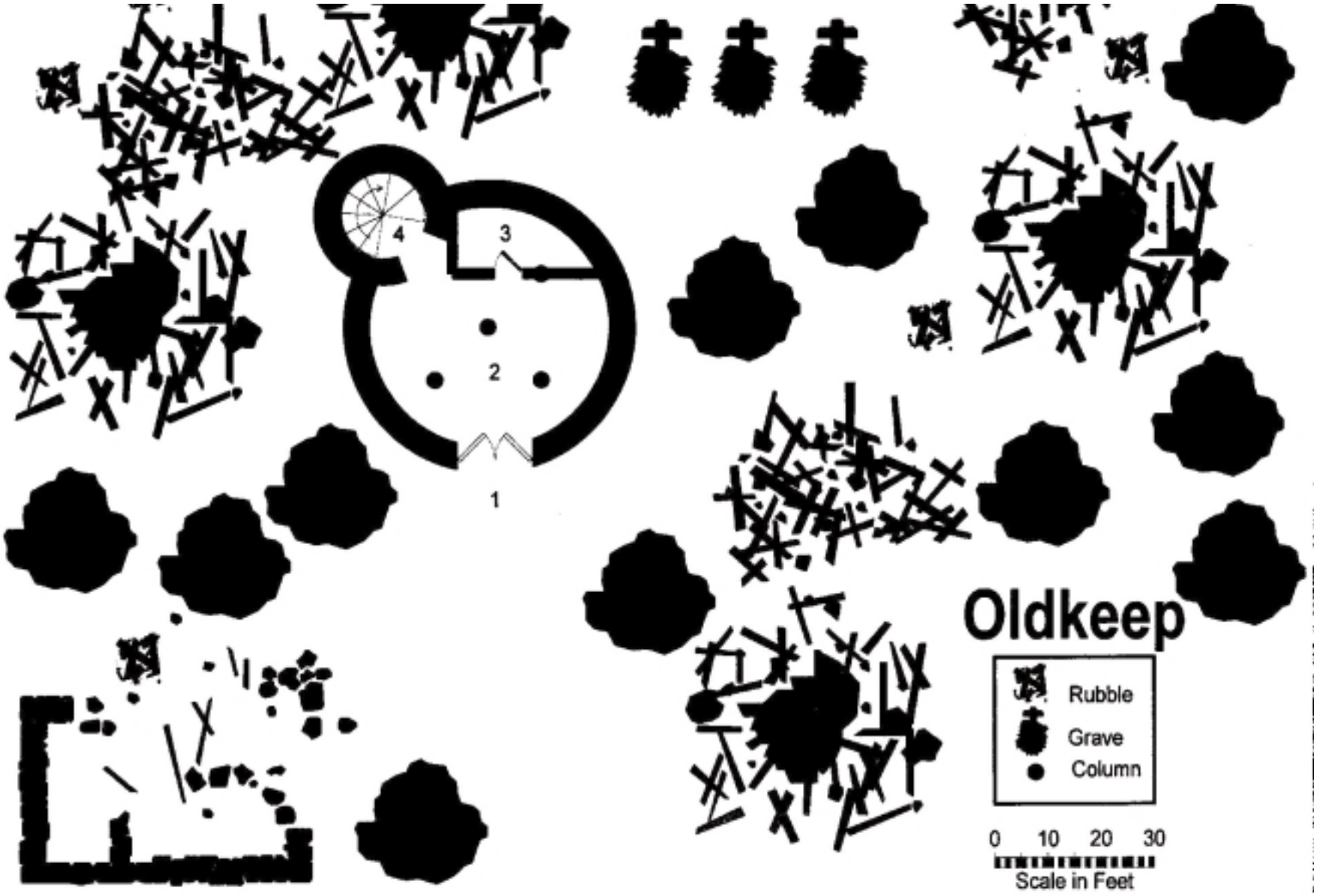
The only entrance to the keep appears to be a pair of large, wooden doors.

If Kyrnyn is expecting the adventurers, these doors are open, and he is waiting in the main hall. If the adventurers have arrived unannounced, however, the doors are closed, and barred from inside. The doors are 2 inches thick, with hardness 5 and 20 hp. Lifting the bar from inside requires a Strength check (DC 15); lifting it from outside is more difficult (up to DC 25, depending on the method the adventurers use).

Any attempts to bash down the doors while Muck is inside will awaken him.

2. Main Hall

Plainly, this place was once a grand hall, a meeting place for an entire community. Now it reeks of filth and decay, and the bones and offal of countless dead cattle and wild game lie scattered about. There is a small door opposite the main entrance, and to the left of that, an alcove that probably leads to a staircase. A large hole in the ceiling looks as though something fell through the floor from the second level at some point.


4
3
2
1
Oldkeep
Rubble
Grave
Column
0 10 20 30
Scale in Feet

Dominating the hall is the large, bestial form of the two-headed giant that has terrorized Newkeep. One of its heads appears to be dozing, but the other watches you intently. "Ssshh," it says, putting one finger to its lips. "He's asleep now, but if we're not too loud, we can talk. My name is Kyrnyn, and this is my curse."

Once an important meeting area for the people of Oldkeep, the main hall is now nothing more than Muck's sleeping area. Provided the adventurers haven't made a great deal of noise getting in, Kyrnyn has managed to lull Muck to sleep, so that he can converse with the adventurers and explain his situation. Go to "Talking to Kyrnyn," below.

3. Old Storeroom

This fairly large room apparently was designed to hold supplies, and the scraps of old flour bags show that it may have served some duty as a granary. Now, though, it is strewn with bits of equipment: armor, a few weapons, a staff, and a few old leather packs and bags. Everything appears as though it's been rifled through by a giant hand.

After their companions died, Kyrnyn and Hartmund buried them, and put their possessions here for safekeeping. Of course, after Muck became the dominant personality of the ettin's two heads, it smashed as much of this stuff as possible, knowing that doing so hurt Kyrnyn. Still, the armor and some of the weapons are still serviceable, and there's even a potion in here that both heads have forgotten about.

If the adventurers explore this room, they discover that one suit of chainmail, a *+1 longsword*, a single spear, and a *potion of heroism* have survived Muck's efforts. If Kyrnyn is still alive by the time the adventurers go through these things, he lets them divide these things among them however they like. "My friends would have wanted it that way."

4. The Stairs

At the top of the staircase, waits another large room, with a huge hole in the floor through which can be seen the first floor of the keep. This room appears to have been gutted by fire at some point, and nothing seems to be of any value here.

The spiral staircase in the alcove leads upward to the second floor, where Stondylus once had his laboratory. The room was gutted by fire when Kyrnyn and his companions defeated him two years ago, and further damaged when Kyrnyn had to smash through the floor to escape after the battle.

There is only one thing of value here—if the characters can reach it. Across from the entry, a broken shelf still holds a scroll made by Stondylus himself. Ironically, it is a *polymorph other* spell.

TALKING TO KYRNYN

If the adventurers haven't simply attacked, Kyrnyn explains his dilemma:

"I was once a man, like yourselves, but the magic of the wizard Stondylus has trapped me in this form. Now, Muck, my second head, is exerting his independence, and I cannot control him any more. I beg of you, if you cannot help me solve the riddle that is my salvation, then please, take my life before Muck kills again."

Kyrnyn believes that the solution to the riddle is "myself," but knowing that hasn't helped him. For whatever reason, Heironeous has not granted him the divine wisdom to dispel the magic that transformed him two years ago. Thus, Kyrnyn is convinced there is more to the riddle that he has somehow overlooked.

The answer, of course, is in Kyrnyn's understanding that the answer applies not to his current form of an ettin, but to his own personality—the one that spawned the second, more malevolent head. The riddle's answer then, is "the man, Kyrnyn," and requires both a recognition on Kyrnyn's part of his transgressions against his alignment, as well as contrition for his misdeeds.

The adventurers may have no more luck sorting this out than Kyrnyn himself—especially considering they do not know his history. If they have encountered him somewhere other than Oldkeep (at the shrine to Heironeous in Newkeep, for example), Kyrnyn waits around for about ten minutes before deciding that he is pushing his luck. "I'm going to leave, before Muck wakes up," he says. "If you think you have the answer, look for me in Oldkeep. Anyone from Newkeep can tell you how to find it."

At Oldkeep, though, the adventurers have only about ten minutes before Malwick and his cronies arrive. If they still have not solved the riddle by then, Malwick forces the issue by attacking—and waking up Muck. The adventurers now must race to solve the riddle before either Muck kills them, or Kyrnyn is finally

Solving the Riddle

The riddle Kyrnyn has been tasked to solve is full of clues, but recognizing them requires an understanding of Heironeous. The clues hidden in the riddle are explained below:

"Two heads have we, but born with one."

(This identifies "we" as Kyrnyn, and indicates that he was born with only one head—thus, he was not always an ettin.)

"We avenged, healed, and protected."

(This is almost directly quoted from the description of good clerics in the *Player's Handbook*. It is a clue that the speaker was once a good cleric.)

"Our master was Invincible,"

(Heironeous's title is "the Invincible," indicating that the cleric was devoted to Heironeous.)

"But punished we all who objected."

(This is a bit more obscure. It relates how Kyrnyn abused his power as a cleric to exact vengeance, rather than justice. The adventurers are only likely to learn this if they convince Kyrnyn to tell them about his past.)

"Heeded we the six-armed king,"

(This is a reference to Hextor, Heironeous's brother and arch-enemy—a deity with six arms. Hextor is the god of tyranny—a trap into which Kyrnyn had started to fall.)

"And so by our god were rejected."

(This part Kyrnyn has already deciphered: Because he transgressed against Heironeous by behaving contrary to his alignment, he has fallen from Heironeous's favor—as evidenced by the choice of divine spells Heironeous has allowed Kyrnyn.)

"Thus, this is our fate:

One head, twice bisected."

(And so, Kyrnyn, who was already of two minds—one that served Heironeous, and one that felt it was acceptable to punish anyone with differing views—was cursed with two heads: one that serves Heironeous, and one that is more self-centered and tyrannical.)

brought down—at which point, in a bright glow, he resumes his true form, in death.

THE END OF THE ETTIN

If Kyrnyn can be made to realize the true answer to the riddle, he immediately learns the *dispel magic* divine spell, and can cast it right away. Unfortunately, circumstances conspire to work against him. At that moment, Malwick and his mob of villagers arrive, intent on slaying the monster where it stands. Their sudden appearance also awakens Muck, who of course objects to the notion that he is about to become no more.

Should the adventurers wish to prevent Malwick and the villagers from slaying the ettin, they may have a two-front battle on their hands. Malwick uses the villagers as cover while he fires arrow after arrow at the ettin, while Muck simply lays about with a piece of timber, smashing anyone who gets in his way. Muck favors foes who are actually inflicting damage on him, however, so if the adventurers themselves do not attack him, he will instead chase Malwick. Unfortunately, while he struggles with the warrior, he is not casting his *dispel magic* spell—meaning that even more lives are being lost.

The adventurers may decide to assist Malwick, for whatever reason. If this proves to be the case, Kyrnyn does not object, knowing not only that he must be made to pay for the crimes he committed as Muck, but that, even if he is killed as an ettin, he will stand beside Heironeous as a man in the afterlife. In fact, Kyrnyn does his best to restrain Muck from fighting back, reducing Muck's melee attack bonus down to +0, and his melee damage to 1d10. You should describe the ettin as having difficulty moving its limbs, and sometimes physically restraining one arm with the other—or even using one arm to choke one of its throats. The adventurers may guess what is happening, but Malwick sees this only as an opportunity to press the attack.

The best method for defeating the ettin may be through subdual damage. By attacking at a –4 penalty, the adventurers can inflict subdual damage with their normal weapons. If they inflict more subdual damage than the ettin's remaining hit points, the ettin drops, unconscious. (Malwick will want to finish it off, if he's still alive, and must be restrained, or convinced otherwise.)

Aftermath

Should Kyrnyn survive his transformation back into a man, he is eternally grateful to the adventurers for their part in his salvation—and equally penitent that all the suffering Muck caused was because he was not wise enough to realize the lesson Heironeous was trying to teach him.

After helping the people of Newkeep rebuild their bridge and their hamlet, Kyrnyn either takes over Restik's duties at the shrine (if Restik has been killed), or offers to join the adventurers as a hireling. At the very least, he offers them the contents of the Old Storeroom (Area 3), and anything else they want from Oldkeep.

Kyrnyn also makes peace with Malwick, if the village constable survived the final battle with Muck, though he now sees in Malwick much of the same mentality that led to his own plight. He also reminds the adventurers of the curse laid on him by Heironeous, if he perceives the same kind of behavior in their own actions. If Kyryn stays with the adventurers, you can use him to point out to the players when their characters begin to stray from true Lawful Good behavior.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Game designer JD Wiker joined the Roleplaying R&D team at Wizards of the Coast in 1998. He has worked on ALTERNITY, STAR*DRIVE, DARK MATTER, and assorted DUNGEONS & DRAGONS products. Currently he is hard at work on supplements for the new *Star Wars Roleplaying Game*.